

Lesson at a Glance

- **Tribal societies** were absolutely different from those which existed in big cities.
- Tribal societies did not follow the social rules and rituals, prescribed by the Brahmanas, because they divided societies into numerous unequal classes. These societies were known as **tribes**.
- There was a unique bond of kinship among the members of each tribe.
- Their main **source of livelihood** was agriculture. However, **hunter-gatherers** or **herders** were also there.
- Some tribes were **nomadic** and kept on moving from one place to another.
- A tribal group controlled land and pastures jointly and divided these amongst households as per its own rules.
- Many large tribes lived in forests, hills, deserts and places difficult to reach.
- Tribal people did not keep written records. But they preserved **rich customs** and **oral traditions** which help historians to collect knowledge about them.
- Tribal people were spread in almost every region of the subcontinent. Some powerful tribes controlled large territories.
- In Punjab, the Khokhar tribe was very influential during the 13th and 14th centuries. Later, the Gakkhars became more important.
- In Multan and Sind, the Langahs and Arghuns dominated extensive regions.
- The Balochis were found in the north-west.
- The Shepherd tribe of Gaddis lived in the western Himalayas.
- The north-eastern part of the subcontinent was dominated by the Nagas, Ahoms and many others.
- The Mundas and Santals were important tribes found in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Bengal.
- The Kolis were found in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat.
- The Bhils were spread across western and central India.
- The Gonds lived in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

- Nomadic pastoralists lived on milk and other pastoral products. The Banjaras were the most important trader-nomads.
- Smaller castes or *jatis* emerged with the growth of the society. Smiths, carpenters and masons were recognised as separate *jatis*.
- Among the Kshatriyas, new Rajput clans became powerful by the 11th and 12th centuries. They belonged to different lineages such as Hunas, Chandelas, Chalukyas, etc. Some of these had been tribes earlier. Many of these clans came to be regarded as Rajputs.
- The rise of Rajput clans to the position of rulers set an example for the tribal people to follow.
- The Gonds lived in a vast forested region known as Gondwana. They practised **shifting cultivation**. The large Gond tribe was further divided into many smaller clans. Each clan had its own *raja* or *rai*. About the time that the power of the Delhi Sultans was declining, a few large Gond kingdoms were beginning to dominate the smaller Gond chiefs. The *Akbar Nama* mentions the Gond kingdom of Garha Katanga.
- Garha Katanga was a rich state. However, it was defeated by the Mughals. Despite that, the Gond kingdoms survived for some time.
- The Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from present-day Myanmar in the 13th century. They created a new state by suppressing the older political system of the *bhuiyans* (landlords).
- During the 16th century, they annexed the kingdoms of the Chhutiyas and of Koch-Hajo and subjugated many other tribes. Thus, they built a large state. However, they faced many invasions from the south-west and finally they were defeated by the Mughals.
- Ahom society was divided into clans or *Khels*. The society was very sophisticated.
- The Ahoms worshipped their own tribal gods. However, in the reign of Sib Singh Hinduism became the predominant religion. But the Ahom kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

Q. 1. Match the following:

garh
tanda
labourer

khel
chaurasi
caravan

clan
Sib Singh
Durgawati

Garha Katanga
Ahom State
paik
chaurasi
caravan
paik
khel
Ahom State
Garha Katanga

Ans.

garh
tanda
labourer
clan
Sib Singh
Durgawati

Q. 2. Fill in the blanks:

- (a) The new castes emerging within varnas were called
- (b) were historical works written by the Ahoms.
- (c) The mentions that Garha Katanga had 70,000 villages.
- (d) As tribal states became bigger and stronger they gave land grants to and

Ans.

- (a) *jatis* (b) *Buranjis*
(c) *Akbar Nama* (d) temples, Brahmanas.

Q. 3. State whether true or false:

- (a) Tribal societies had rich oral traditions.
- (b) There were no tribal communities in the north-western part of the subcontinent.
- (c) The Chaurasi in Gond states contained several cities.
- (d) The Bhils lived in the north-eastern part of the subcontinent.

Ans.

- (a)—T, (b)—F, (c)—F, (d)—F.

Q. 4. What kinds of exchanges took place between nomadic pastoralists and settled agriculturists?

Ans.

The nomadic pastoralists exchanged wool, ghee, etc. with settled agriculturists for grain, cloth, utensils and other products.

Let's Understand

Q. 5. How was the administration of the Ahom state organized?

Ans.

The Ahom state depended upon forced labour. Those forced to work for the state were known as *paiks*. A census of the population was taken. Each village had to send a number of *paiks* by rotation.

People of densely populated areas were shifted to thinly populated areas. Ahom clans were thus broken up. By the first half of the 17th century the administration became quite centralised.

Q. 6. *What changes took place in varna-based society?*

Ans. The following changes took place in *varna*-based society:

- (i) Smaller castes or *jatis* emerged within *varnas*.
- (ii) On the other hand, many tribes and social groups were taken into caste-based society and given the status of *jatis*.
- (iii) Specialised artisans such as smiths, carpenters and masons were also recognised as separate *jatis* by the Brahmanas.
- (iv) *Jatis* rather than *varna* became the basis for organising society.
- (v) Among the Kshatriyas, new Rajput clans became powerful.
- (vi) Many tribes became part of the caste system. But only the leading tribal families could join the ruling class. A large majority joined the lower *jatis* of caste society.
- (vii) Many dominant tribes of Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier had adopted Islam. They continued to reject the caste-system.

Q. 7. *How did tribal societies change after being organised into a state?*

Ans. The emergence of large states changed the nature of tribal societies. We can understand this with the help of two examples—the Gond society and the Ahom society.

- (i) **The Gond Society.** Their basically equal society gradually got divided into unequal social classes. Brahmanas received land grants from the Gond rajas and became more influential. The Gond chiefs now wished to be recognised as Rajputs. So, Aman Das, the Gond raja of Garha Katanga, assumed the title of 'Sangram Shah'.
- (ii) **The Ahom Society.** The Ahoms built a large state which brought many changes in the Ahom society. The influence of Brahmanas increased. Temples and Brahmanas were granted land by the king. In the reign of Sib Singh, Hinduism became the predominant

religions. But the Ahom Kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs after adopting Hinduism.

Let's Discuss

Q. 8. *Were the Banjaras important for the economy?*

Ans. The Banjaras were very important for the economy. They were trader-nomads and controlled trade and commerce. They played an important role in transporting grain to the city markets. They usually bought grain where it was cheaply available and carried it to places where it was dearer. From there, they again reloaded their oxen with anything that could be profitably sold in other places.

Q. 9. *In what ways was the history of the Gonds different from that of the Ahoms? Were there any similarities?*

Ans. The history of the Gonds was different from that of the Ahoms in the following ways:

- (i) The Gonds lived in a vast forested region called Gondwana. The Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from present-day Myanmar in the 13th century.
- (ii) The Gonds practised shifting cultivation. The Ahoms did not practise this type of cultivation.
- (iii) The Gond society was not as much developed as the Ahom's. The Ahoms built a large state by using firearms. They could even make high quality gunpower and cannons.
- (iv) The Ahom society was very sophisticated. Poets and scholars were given land grants. Theatre was encouraged. We do not find these things in the Gond society.

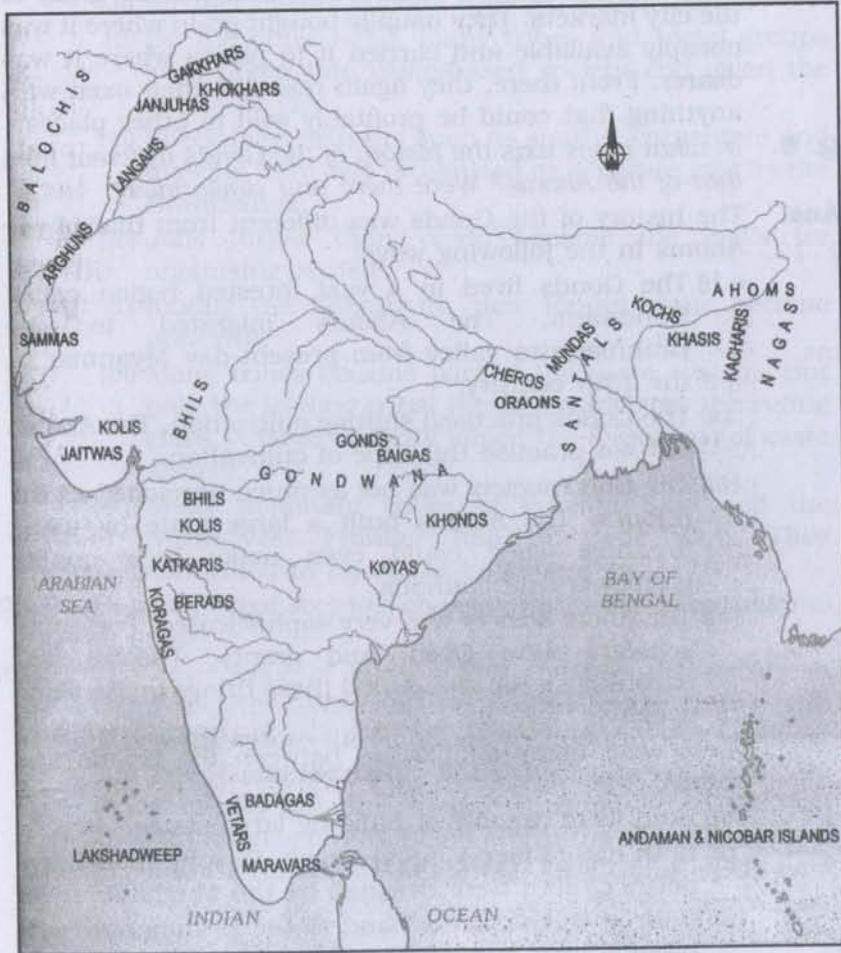
There were many similarities between the Gonds and Ahoms:

- (i) Both were capable of building large states.
- (ii) Both had to face Mughal attack. Despite their brave defence, both were defeated by the Mughals.
- (iii) Both of them granted land to the Brahmanas, who became very influential.
- (iv) We find the administration centralised in the history of the Gonds as well as the Ahoms.

Let's Do

Q. 10. Plot the location of the tribes mentioned in this chapter on a map. For any two, discuss whether their mode of livelihood was suited to the geography and the environment of the area where they lived.

Ans. Several tribes live in different parts of India. See the map given below:



These tribes settled temporarily at the places which suited them as per their need and livelihood. Whenever, they found the environment or their mode of living unfavourable, they migrated to other suitable places.

Q. 11. Find out about present-day government policies towards tribal populations and organise a discussion about these.

Ans. Present-day government policies towards tribal populations are very positive.

- (i) Education is being spread in the tribal areas.
- (ii) Facilities like roads, water, electricity have been increased.
- (iii) The government is doing actively for the overall upliftment of the tribal populations.
- (iv) The government has enforced reservation for them in government jobs. This policy of the government has helped the tribal people in many ways. They are now joining the mainstream of the society.
- (v) The government is also determined to protect their cultural and social traditions.

Q. 12. Find out more about present-day nomadic pastoral groups in the sub-continent. What animals do they keep? Which are the areas frequented by these groups?

Ans. Present-day nomadic pastoral groups in the sub-continent are - Gaddi shepherds living in the western Himalayas, Gujjar Bakarwals, living in Jammu & Kashmir, Banjaras living in Rajasthan. These nomadic people keep sheep, goats and camels. They frequently visit Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan.

